



ANC

10¢



TIM HOLT

as **RED MASK!**

No. 26





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TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT

THIS IS THE TALE OF A SHIRT—AN EVIL SHIRT THAT BUTTONED UP CRIME AND GUNPLAY! AND WHEN **TIM HOLT** GOT INVOLVED HE FORTUNATELY HAD SOMETHING UP HIS OWN SLEEVE—THE DISGUISE OF THE FABULOUS **REDMASK**—WHICH ENABLED HIM TO PUT THE COLLAR ON

“THE RED RIVERS GANG”



THE FIRST NEWS OF THE COMING OF THE OUTLAWS INTO THE APACHE ARROYO COUNTRY NORTH OF BULLET BURSTS WITH THE SHOCK OF GUNFIRE!



WE GOT THE GOLD. NOW WE'LL HOLE UP IN A FARMER'S HOUSE BACK IN THE HILLS. I GOT A FRIEND IN TOWN WHO'S GOIN' TO TIP US OFF TO SOME GOOD JOBS AROUND THESE PARTS...



IN BULLET, SOME HOURS LATER, AS CHITO RIDES INTO TOWN WITH TWO...

WHERE! SEE PRETTY GIRL! NEW AROUND HERE! I HAVE NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE!



AT THE T-BAR-H RANCH, SOME DAYS AFTER THE TRAIN ROBBERY...

TELEGRAM FROM PHOENIX... RED RIVER'S OUTLAW BUNCH IS AROUND BULLET - I'M TO CONTACT FEDERAL MARSHAL, B. JORDAN, IN TOWN...



HA! SHE EES ENTER CLOTHING STORE WELL, I AM NEEDING A NEW SUITS!



AND SO...

YOU'VE ALREADY BOUGHT SIX SUITS, FIFTEEN SHIRTS, FORTY TIES!

SEE NOTHING! SHOW ME SOME **MORE!**



IN THE BACK ROOM OF THE LITTLE STORE...

YOU FOOL! THAT GIRL SOLD HIM THE SHIRT!

I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU IN TODAY! I HAD IT READY TO SEND. WE MUST GET IT BACK!



I'LL GET IT BACK, ALL RIGHT. THAT HOMBRE WILL NEVER GET HOME ALIVE TODAY!

GOOD! REMEMBER - I'LL HIDE THE REST OF THOSE CODE MESSAGES I SEND YOU IN THE STITCHING OF THE SHIRT, IN THE FORK OF THE OAK TREE IN STORM CANYON.



TIM HOLT

LATE THAT AFTERNOON, AS CHITO CANTERS HOMEWARD...



THEN—A COLT BELCHES FROM THE TRAIL! A GRIM FIGURE ON A BIG GOLDEN STALLION HURTTLES FORWARD!



THEY RUN, LIKE THE RATS THEY ARE! THEY'LL SHOOT AN UNARMED MAN—BUT WON'T STAND UP AND FIGHT! NOW, WHY IN THUNDER WERE THEY TRYING TO KILL CHITO?



CAREFULLY TIM SPREADS OUT CHITO'S PURCHASES. AFTER AN HOUR OF HUNTING, HE FINDS WHAT HE SEEKS.



MAKKA WA! MY RIFLE, SHE'S EBN MY RIFLE SHEATH! I AM HAVING NO GUN TO SHOOT WEETH!



LET'S CLEAR OUT OF HERE! THAT GUY IS LIABLE TO KILL ONE OF US THE WAY HE SHOOT!



NEXT DAY AS THE SILVER CITY STAGE ROUNDS A CORNER OF SADDLE ROCK...



AND THEN, FROM THE ROCKY HEIGHTS ABOVE...



WE HAVE THEM WHERE WE WANT THEM, CHITO! KEEP 'EM BUSY! THE SHERIFF WITH A POSSE IS RIDING TO CATCH THEM IN A TRAP!



A TRAP! WE'VE RUN INTO A TRAP!

HIGHTAIL IT OUT OF HERE!

SHERIFF GAGE OF BULLET GALLOPS PAST THE STAGE WITH HIS POSSE HOT ON HIS HEELS...



THEY WON'T GET FAR, BOYS! WE GOT 'EM IN OUR SIGHTS!

BUT—SOME HOURS LATER, IN BULLET...



THEY GOT CLEAN AWAY, BY RIDING IN A MOUNTAIN STREAM! RECKON ABOUT ALL I'M GOOD FOR IS TO FIX THE JAIL ROOF LIKE I BEEN DOING LATELY!

IT'S A TOUGH BREAK. I WON'T GET ANOTHER STITCHED SHIRT IN MY HANDS AGAIN!

WAIT! THERE MAY BE A WAY OF GETTING MYSELF ANOTHER OF THOSE COLORED SHIRTS—BY PAYING A VISIT TO THAT CLOTHING STORE AFTER HOURS! BECAUSE IT'S A CINC THAT SOMEBODY IN THAT STORE IS TIPPING OFF THAT RED RIVERS BUNCH TO EASY JOBS...



AS THE KEROSENE LAMP COMES ON IN BULLET...



THIS MASTER KEY WILL DO THE TRICK. NOW TO HUNT AROUND FOR A SHIRT...



DON'T MAKE A MOVE, MISTER! I HAVE YOU COVERED!

TIM HOLT



A GIRL!

YOU'RE NOT GETTING OUT OF HERE ALIVE! I CAUGHT YOU TRYING TO ROB THE PLACE!



I CAN'T SHOOT A GIRL—BUT I CAN'T LET HER SHOOT ME EITHER! GOT TO MAKE A RUN FOR IT!



BUT I WON'T RUN FAR! HERE SHE COMES NOW—PROBABLY GOING TO TELL HER OUTLAW PALS I BROKE INTO HER STORE!

DEEP INTO THE HILLS GALLOPS THE PRETTY SALES LADY, AND RIGHT BEHIND HER COMES DEPUTY SHERIFF, TIM HOLT...



HIGH ON A ROCK LEDGE TIM PEERS DOWNWARD, GASPING IN SURPRISE...

WHY—THOSE OUTLAWS ARE THREATENING HER! IF SHE ISN'T A MEMBER OF THE RED RIVERS GANG—WHO IS SHE?



UNDER THE BRANCHES OF A PINE TREE, TIM HOLT DISAPPEARS, AND IN HIS PLACE—

I'VE GOT TO HELP HER, AND SINCE SHE THINKS TIM HOLT IS A COMMON CROOK—REDMASK WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO BEFRIEND HER!



AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE OUTLAW'S CABIN—RED AND THE REST OF THE BOYS AIN'T HERE, BUT WE'LL GET INFORMATION OUTTA YOU JUST THE SAME!

WHO ARE YUH?





TIM HOLT



HOLT BROKE INTO THE STORE—
TO GET ANOTHER OF THOSE
COBB-STITCHED SHIRTS. I'LL
HAVE SHERIFF GAGE GET HIM
WITH A WARRANT!

I CAN'T TELL HER THE
TRUTH WITHOUT REVEALING
REDMASK'S IDENTITY! NOW
I'VE GOT TO GET THE REST
OF THE BUNCH—TO SAVE
MY OWN NECK!



LOOK—THAT WINTERS GIRL
AND REDMASK! AND THEY'VE
GOT JIM AND ED AND WACO!

THEY'RE TAKING THEM TO JAIL!
COME ON—I GOT AN IDEA HOW
TO SURPRISE THESE LAWMEN...
AND GET THE BOYS OUT OF
JAIL AT THE SAME TIME!

SOME HOURS LATER, JUST
AS REDMASK AND THE GIRL
MARSHAL HAVE LEFT THEIR
PRISONERS IN THE TOWN
JAIL...

RED! SURE IS
GOOD TO SEE
YOU! LET'S
GET OUT OF
HERE!

NO! THE SHERIFF
AND HIS DEPUTY
WILL BE ALONG
SOON. I'M
LAYIN' A TRAP
FOR THEM.



WE'LL KILL 'EM BOTH! THERE
WON'T BE NO LAW IN TOWN FOR
A SPELL—WE'LL ROB AND TAKE
WHATEVER WE WANT! THEN WE'LL
SHAKE THE DUST OF THIS PLACE
AN' HIGHTAL IT OVER THE
BORDER TO MEXICO!



HEY! SOMEBODY TURN OFF
THEM LAMPS? WANT 'EM TO
SEE US WAITIN' IN HERE?



SECONDS LATER...

I'LL GO IN AN RECORD THE
CHARGES AG'IN 'EM!

DON'T FORGET ABOUT
THAT TIM HOLT! YOU TELL
ME HE'S YOUR DEPUTY BUT
I THINK HE'S A CROOK!



FACED BY REDMASK'S UNWAVERING SIXGUNS, THE REMAINING OUTLAWS PREFER JAIL TO SURE DEATH...



TIM HOLT

BUCKY DWARA ALWAYS RAN FROM A FIGHT. FROM THE RIO GRANDE TO THE MISSOURI, HE TURNED HIS BACK ON FIST-FIGHT AND GUN-BATTLE, AND FLED LIKE A COWARD. AND THEN CAME THE DAY WHEN BUCKY'S BACK WAS TO THE WALL. IT WAS FIGHT OR GO TO JAIL — WHEN TIM HOLT STEPPED FORWARD TO OFFER BUCKY THE SOLUTION TO HIS TROUBLES AT THE END OF HIS —

“FLIGHT FROM A FIGHT”



IN A TRAILTOWN SALOON, SOMEWHERE WEST OF WICHITA —



MY BOYS — PITCHIN' IN AGAINST THE FLVIN' M RIDERS —!

I WRASSLE BRONCS FOR THE PITCHFORK SPREAD — BUT I DASSN'T PITCH IN AN FIGHT WITH MY BUDDIES! I JUST CAN'T...!



TIM HOLT



GOT TO HURRY OUT TO THE RANCH—DRAW MY PAY—AND RIDE ON! IT'S JUST THE SAME AS IT'S ALWAYS BEEN... BECAUSE I CAN'T FIGHT!



AT THE PITCHFORK BUNKHOUSE SOME HOURS LATER...
JUST AS WELL YOU QUIT, O'HARA SAVED ME THE TROUBLE OF FIRING YOU! I DON'T PAY A MAN THAT WON'T FIGHT FOR HIS RANCH!



SOUTHWARD FROM THE PITCHFORK, ACROSS THE SANTA FE CUTOFF RIDES YOUNG BUCKY, AND AS HE RIDES, HIS MIND BEETHS IN HELPLESS FURY.
I RECKON I AIN'T FITTEN TO CALL MYSELF A MAN! I'M JEST A SPINELESS JELLYFISH.

IN THE PANHANDLE COUNTRY OF NORTHERN TEXAS, HE GETS ANOTHER JOB WRANGLIN' WILD BRONGS...



NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT ME HERE RECKON I'M SAFE—FOR A LITTLE WHILE..

BUT EVERY TIME COWBOYS RODE TO TOWN, THEY FOUGHT—IT WAS A WAY OF LETTING OFF HIGH SPIRITS—



HEY, BUCKY! COME A'RUNNIN'! WE'RE TANGLING WITH FIVE BOYS FROM THE TRIANGLE IRON!



THE SAME OLD PATTERN! NEW JOB! NEW FIGHT! AND SINCE I CAN'T FIGHT—I GOT TO START RUNNING ALL OVER AGAIN!

ON A RANCH SOME MILES NORTH OF SANTA FE BUCKY FINDS NEW SECURITY, UNTIL THE NIGHT THAT BIG LOM BENNETT, THE RANCH BULLY, DECIDES TO HAVE SOME FUN...



YUM WANT THAT FANCY WARBAG, BUCKY? GO GET IT!

HE'S LOOKIN' FOR A FIGHT—AND I CAN'T GIVE HIM ONE!

TIM HOLT

WITH A SICKLY SMILE ON HIS LIPS, BUCKY WALKS MEELY OUT AND RETRIEVES HIS WARBAG—AND HIS FELLOW RIDERS TURN AWAY FROM HIM, IN SHAME FOR HIS COWARDICE...



RECKON I GOT TO BE DRAWIN' MY PAY AND MOSEYIN' ON!

GOOD RIDDANCE TOO...!



YOU SEEM PLUMS COOL TOWARD ME, BUCKY—BUT I GOT NEWS THAT'LL MAKE YUM GIT UP AN' TAKE NOTICE!

NOT INTERESTED OX!

TOWARD LATE SPRING, BUCKY DHARA WALKS HIS PAINT PONY INTO BULLET...



DABURN MY KID! IT'S BLAZIN' BUCKY DHARA—THE TOUGHEST GENT I EVER SAW THROW LEAD. BUCKY—IT'S GOOD TO SEE YUM!

HOWDY, OX!



IT'S A CINCH DEAL, BOY! YOU AN' ME USED TO BE RUSTLERS IN THE MEDICINE BOW COUNTRY—BUT THIS SETUP HERE HAS EVEN THAT LICKED! WE CAN'T MISS! WE'LL GET RICH!

COUNT ME OUT, OX. I'VE REFORMED!

AFTER AN HOUR OF ARGUMENT, OX BOOLEY SLIPS FROM THE LITTLE SALOON...



SO YUM WON'T COME 'N WITH ME, HUH? GOOD ENOUGH! THEN WHEN THE SHERIFF COMES SNOOPIN' AROUND AFTER I'VE PULLED MY JOB—YOU'LL GET BLAMED PER IT, MR. REFORMED!

SOME NIGHTS LATER, OX AND HIS HARDCASE CREW STRIKE THE GRAZING HERDS OF THE SLASH BOX RANCH AT THE BASE OF THE BLUE RIDGE FOOTHILLS...



WE GOT EM ON THE RUN! YAHOOO!

AS THE HOOFOBEATS OF THE RUSTLERS HORSES FADE INTO THE DISTANCE, ONLY A FANCY BEAD-DESIGNED WARBAG REMAINS TO CATCH THE EYE OF ANY WHO MIGHT BE SEARCHING FOR CLUES.



TIM HOLT

NEXT DAY, AS DAWN GLOWS INTO MORNING



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! BUCKY O'HARA! THIS IS HIS WAR-BAG. I'VE SEEN IT OFTEN ENOUGH!

YOU RECKON WE OUGHT TO PUT A POSSE INTO THE HILLS AFTER HIM?

NO, SHERIFF! LET ME HANDLE THIS AS YOUR DEPUTY, BUT IN A WAY I SEE FIT. BUCKY O'HARA USED TO BE AN OUTLAW, BUT HE MADE ME A PROMISE, ABOUT A YEAR AGO...



AT HIGH NOON, IN A LITTLE EATING PLACE OFF BULLET'S MAIN STREET



THAT YOURS, BUCKY?

HUH? WHY, SURE IT'S MINE! SOME LOWLIFE THIEF STOLE IT AND—



TIM! TIM HOLT! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE—

SINCE A POSSE HAD A MOOSE AROUND YOUR NECK, AND WERE GOING TO HANG YOU FOR RUSTLING AND MURDER! YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE, BUCKY?



"HOW COULD I FORGET, TIM? THE WAY YOU FRONTED FOR ME THAT DAY—IN THE FACE OF ALL THOSE MEN!"

YOU HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS MAN EITHER RUSTLED THOSE STEERS OR MURDERED HAL PALMER!



THERE THEY GO! THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL, FRIEND.

I KNOW IT! BUT I AM INNOCENT, HOMBRE! I NEVER RUSTLED THE CATTLE! I DIDN'T KILL PALMER. ONLY TROUBLE WITH ME IS—MY TEMPER! IT KEEPS GETTING ME INTO TROUBLE!



THEN I WANT YOU TO PROMISE ME NOT TO FIGHT—WITH GUN OR FISTS—FOR THE NEXT YEAR! IF YOU KEEP THAT PROMISE, YOU'LL HAVE LICKED YOUR TEMPER!

I PROMISE, TIM!

TIM HOLT

I KEPT THAT PROMISE, TIM—
THOUGH THERE WERE TIMES WHEN
I WAS PLUMB TEMPTED! AND FOR
DOING THAT—OX BOOLEY TRIES
TO IMPLICATE ME IN HIS
LITTLE RUSTLING STUNT!



I'M RELEASING YOU NOW
FROM THAT PROMISE, BUCKY.
YOU'VE PROVED YOURSELF A
STEADY MAN. YOU'RE MY
DEPUTY—AND WE'RE GOING
OUT TO BRING IN OX BOOLEY!



HOURS LATER, AS THE SHADOWS
LENGTHEN ACROSS THE PEAKS
OF THE RIBSAW RANGE...

I'VE RIDDEN WITH OX
BEFORE ON HIS MUST-
LING JAUNTS. HE ALWAYS
HTS FOR THE LAVA
FLOWS, SO THE HERD
WON'T MAKE TRACKS!

THEN
HE'LL BE
HEADING
FOR THE
FLOWS
WEST OF
RED
BUTTES.
LET'S GO!



ALL NIGHT THE TWO DEPUTIES RIDE! AN HOUR AFTER DAWN,
AT THE BASE OF THE RED BUTTES...



WE CORRALED 'EM,
BUCKY!

THAT TIM HOLT HOMBRE-
AN! BUCKY O'HARA!

I'M TAKING YOU ALIVE BOOLEY!
DROPPED THAT SIX!

OWH!



LIKE A CATAMOUNT, TIM LEAPS
FROM HIS SADDLE...



RIGHT BEHIND HIM—

A FIGHT! YAHOO!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING
FOR THIS FOR A REAL LONG
TIME! WAHOOO!



TIM HOLT

FOR A YEAR, BUCKY OMARA HAS HELD HIMSELF IN CHECK! BUT NOW HE IS FREE TO LET GO—AND HE DOES!



AND AS BUCKY GOES "ON THE PROUD," TIM IS FINISHING OFF OX BOOLEY WITH A RIB-CRACKING ONE-TWO PUNCH...





THE WILD STALLION

THE great roan stallion threw his head high into the wind and sent a whinny trumpeting out across the waving bunch grass of the prairie. There was danger in this wind that blew down off the sharp red sandstone peaks of the Cordillera Rim, for the wind carried the smell of — men!

Man to the big roan stallion, Ka'aba, meant death, or what was even worse to his kind, capture and imprisonment behind the wooden fences that men called a corral. Ka'aba had seen other horses caught. He had seen them caught and roped and thrown, to be led away to the corrals where a leather contraption was fastened on them tightly. And then one of these men fastened himself to the horse's back, and quitted and spurred him to frenzied bucking and jumping.

Only rarely did one of the horses win such a contest. And when he won, he was not turned free, a victor. He was put aside for the next day and the next, until one of the hated man-things succeeded in breaking his spirit. That much Ka'aba had seen from the fringes of the wild Arizona range where he ran free.

Many times had a man-thing chased him. Many times had he heard the barking thunder of the little guns they carried, and had seen the sworling loop of a rope aimed for his thickly maned neck that was arched so stiffly now, as he sniffed the breezes.

Ka'aba snorted, and tossed his head until the thick red mane leaped and danced. There was no doubt of it! A man—many men!—were coming up from the bottom lands toward the grassy plain where he browsed.

The big roan stallion ran easily, letting his mane and his long tail shake free. In the distance, he could hear the faint tattoo of the cowboys' horses as their hooves thudded into the ground. Ka'aba almost laughed. If those tame things with the leather saddles on their

backs wanted a run, he'd run them—until they fell to the ground with exhaustion!

Far ahead of him, Ka'aba sighted a small group of mares and colts clustered about an old white stallion. They were all poised, looking his way. Ka'aba sent his nicker shrilling out across the grasslands, to warn them. When the white stallion pawed at the ground and trumpeted a challenging reply, Ka'aba veered through the mesquite clumps and came toward him at full gallop.

This was no time to fight another stallion over the ownership of a few mares and colts! Man was coming—man, the enemy of all wild things, man who came with his leather contraptions and broke the spirit of wild animals so they could be made to serve him!

It mattered nothing to Ka'aba that in serving man, horses found a degree of happiness. There were lumps of sugar served on a palm, and rubdowns after hot, hard runs—but there was no romping and rolling in the sweet-scented grama grass, no sniffing the winds of the world high on a mesa rim, no galloping all day long without rope or bridle or saddle!

Ka'aba whickered a warning to the white stallion. He did not want to fight, not with those men racing far behind him, coming steadily after him. A young mare threw up her head and stared at him, the wind blowing fitfully through the silver mane that curled over her slim neck. She nickered a greeting, and the white stallion reared high, pawing the air and bellowing his rage at this young newcomer.

The white stallion came for him like an arrow from the bow. Ka'aba sidestepped the wicked white teeth that flashed at his flank. He thrust forward with his own teeth and drew blood, then danced back, as if to give the white stallion a chance to quit while the quitting was good.

But the old horse screamed and leaped for him. They met, rearing high, their hooves flashing in the sunlight. Ka'aba missed with his first blows, and twisted sidewise with young agility. The white stallion was a little slower, and took a slashing raking from Ka'aba's teeth.

The second wound seemed to madden the big white horse. He reared up and met Ka'aba again—but this time the young red roan did not miss. His sharp hooves slashed against the white stallion's face, cut him and bloodied him, and drove him to his knees.

Again Ka'aba reared! Again his hooves slashed down, ripping and tearing! It was the law of the wild, the law of claw and fang, the law of kill—or be killed!

The white stallion took the punishment until his face was a red smear. Then he screamed once and ran with the wind, leaving the mares and the colts to Ka'aba.

The roan stallion did not want young mares and frisky colts to slow down his pace. He wanted to be free to race as he had always raced, leading the men who chased him to some box canyon or draw, and shaking them off in the dust that leaped from his flashing hooves.

And now he found himself saddled with a small band of mares and colts! He vented his displeasure by a snort.

The young mare with the silver mane trotted toward him. Ka'aba watched her come with suspicion in his eyes. She was a lovely thing, graceful and fleet as the wind that touched his mane, but she was a mare, and a mare only slowed him down on a long run. The mare touched his cheek with a velvety nose, and Ka'aba hung his head high.

It was almost as if she had said, "Now we belong to you. Men are coming. It's your job to get us out of here!"

He nickered softly, and the mare began to run, leading the other mares a fast pace. She went high into the first rises of the Rim lands, where the dwarf juniper and scrub cedar grow. Here the loneliness of the hills bordered out across a windwept grassland that was dotted with sagebrush and sotol.

Ka'aba followed, making sure that the ungainly young colts kept close to their mothers' heels. He was grateful that even the youngest of them was some months old, for the newborn colts always fell behind on a run like this, fell behind to die without their mothers, for the greater safety of all prevented any from staying behind to tend for them.

Ka'aba lifted his fine red head and sent his call trumpeting out across the hogback ridges and grassy benchlands. In the far distance, the men were coming. They were as relentless as sunlight, as inexorable as a

mountain stream in a spring flash flood.

The men were forcing the play, now. They were herding them up into the high peaks, where the Rim broke into a dozen small cliffs that fronted the great stone escarpment of the Cordillera. Ka'aba had run up there, many moons ago, and knew it for a death trap.

Once the men had the herd high up in those sandstone barriers, the plaited lariats would fly, and mares and colts would go down kicking, to be brought into the corrals, and saddled and broken.

The blood chilled to ice in the red roan's veins as he thought of that! To have a saddle hung across his back that had never known any pressure but that of the wind as he ran!

Ka'aba screamed his fury and his rage into the canyons and the draws, and the silver-maned mare heard the note of fear in it, and increased her pace.

Now the mares were moving slowly, lifting along the narrow ledges to the mesa top. They went with nostrils flaring in panic, for the men were shooting from far away, and the high scream of their bullets as they ricocheted off sandstone outcroppings were like hard whips applied to the mares' backs.

The men were coming swiftly, lifting upward into the high ridges. Lariats coiled in their hands, and the scent of their clothing and the smoke of their cigarettes made a pungent scent that terrified the mares. Back and forth on the broken, flat rock of the mesa they ran, seeking a trail that was not there.

Only Ka'aba stood with head upflung, rigid, as the man-things surrounded the herd. Beyond him, across a deep chasm, was the tableland of the Cordilleras. If he could jump that —!

The silver-maned mare rubbed her shoulder to his. Ka'aba turned his head as if to ask a question. The mare nickered softly.

Ka'aba danced restlessly. His hooves struck sparks as they struck the stone of the mesatop. And then he was away, leaping with a surge of power that was frightening to see! He ran as runs the arrow from the bow, or the bullet from the gun.

One moment he was touching ground, and the next there was empty space beneath his hooves. He leaped, and hung in midair, as if suspended, for a long moment. And then he was on the other side, on the Cordillera tableland, screaming his trumpet-call!

The mare nickered, and began her run. She made her leap. Her hooves scratched at the very edge of the rim for an instant, and then the momentum of her leap carried her on, to safety.

Side by side, Ka'aba and his mare ran on, to freedom.

THE END

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GHOST RIDER

THE

JUST OUTSIDE SILVER CITY STANDS "THE CASTLE"—HUGE, RAMBLING, GLOOMY, AND FORBIDDING—BUILT LONG AGO BY A MINER WHOSE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED WEALTH HAD DRIVEN HIM MAD. MANY ARE THE LEGENDS TOLD OF FABULOUS ROOMS AND SECRET PANELS IN THE ODDLY MEDIEVAL OLD HOUSE, AND OF THE MYSTERIOUS TENANTS IT HAD HARBORED THROUGH THE YEARS...

THIS IS THE STRANGE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE GHOST RIDER KEPT A RENDEZVOUS THERE WITH "THE

MURDERING MEDIUM!"



THE REGION AROUND SILVER CITY HAS FOR MONTHS BEEN TERRORIZED BY AN ELUSIVE BANDIT—AND MURDERER. TONIGHT AGAIN, THE RUTHLESS KILLER CLAIMS HIS PREY—!



NOPE, YUH YELLA COYOTE, YUH AIN'T GONNA GIT THIS PAYLOAD IF I KIN PERFECT IT—!



TIM HOLT.



BUT THIS TIME THE KILLER'S GUNSHOTS HAVE BEEN HEARD, FAR OUT ON THE PRAIRIE, BY ONE WHOSE VERY NAME MAKES EVERY OUTLAW'S BLOOD RUN COLD — **THE GHOST RIDER!**



HE'S HEADED TOWARD "THE CASTLE", AND I HEAR SWAMI GABBINO IS HAVING ANOTHER SEANCE IN HIS "THRONE ROOM" THIS EVENING — AN INVITING PLACE FOR ANY GHOST —!



SPECTRE, I SOMEHOW FEEL THERE WILL BE EXCITEMENT AT SWAMI GABBINO'S TONIGHT. FLY, THEN, WHITE HORSE — WE MAY BE IN TIME TO SEE THIS MEDIUM DISPLAY HIS BAG OF TRICKS!



IT'S THE BANDIT! BUT HE SEEMS RIGHT AT HOME! AND IT LOOKED LIKE THE SWAMI HIMSELF — AND HE'D HEAR ABOUT EVERY VALUABLE STAGE CARGO! HMMM...!



THE BANDIT DIDN'T USE THE FRONT DOOR, SO HE SHOULDN'T MIND IF I —

TIM HOLT



-ENTER
THROUGH
A SECOND
FLOOR
WINDOW!



A REGULAR TREASURE HOUSE!
BUT I RECOGNIZE THESE THINGS—
ALL STOLEN BY THE SILVER CITY
BANDIT— **GABBINO!** BUT HOW
CAN HE BE IN TWO PLACES AT
ONCE? LET'S INVESTIGATE
FURTHER—



YES, IT'S GABBINO—*SNEAKING*
INTO THE SEANCE UNNOTICED—
EXCEPT BY ME! BUT I CAN'T
WAIT ANY LONGER—NOW INTO
THE "THRONE ROOM!"



BEHOLD— A REAL GHOST! A GHOST WHOM
HONEST MEN HAVE NO CAUSE TO FEAR— BUT
WHO HAS TRAILED ONE AMONG YOU— THE
SILVER CITY BANDIT— FROM HIS LATEST
MURDER SHORT MINUTES AGO, TO THIS VERY
ROOM— YOU, SWAMI GABBINO! I WANT YOU!



NO— NO, I TELL YOU—
I NEVER LEFT THIS ROOM—
ASK THEM— THEY HELD MY
HANDS THROUGH THE SESSION—
FOR HOURS— I SWEAR— TELL
HIM— KEEP HIM AWAY
FROM ME—!

IT'S TRUE,
DEAR MR. GHOST—
I'VE HELD HIS
HAND ALL
EVENING,
RIGHT
HERE—

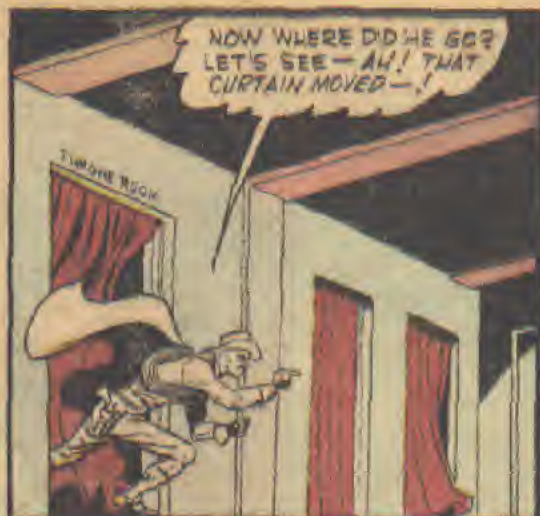
BUT THE GHOST RIDER HAS READ THE
GUILT IN SWAMI GABBINO'S FACE! AND
TRUSTING HIS OWN INTUITION BEYOND
LOGICAL APPEARANCES, HE SEIZES THE
MEDIUM! — WHO TWISTS AWAY—



NO— SPARE ME—
I'M INNOCENT,
I TELL YOU—!

THERE NEVER WAS
SUCH FEAR IN
INNOCENT EYES!

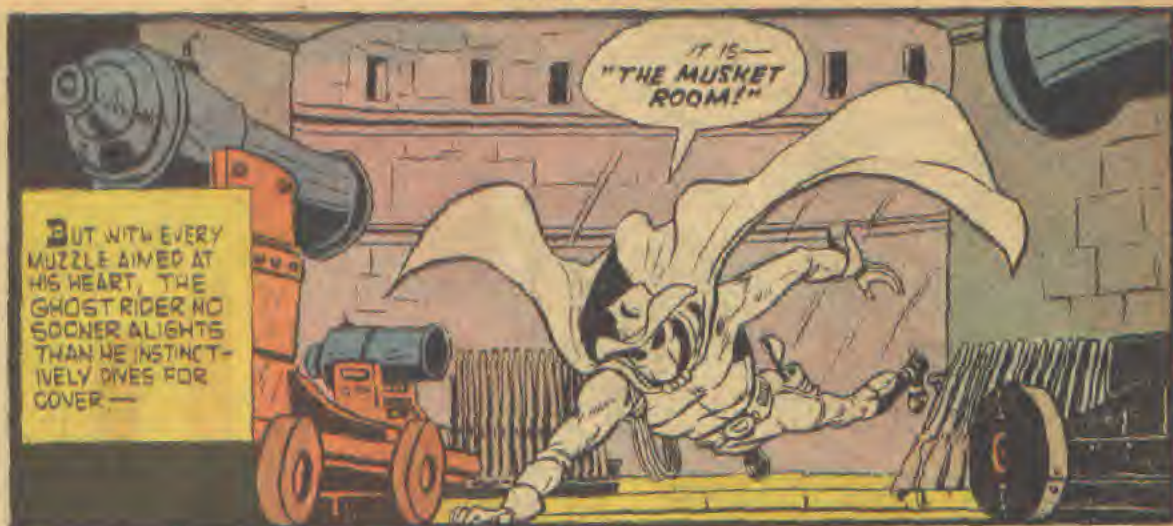
TIM HOLT



THE GHOST RIDER, DODGING A DEADLY SPRING-PROPELLED LUNGE BY ONE OF THE GRUESOME CREATURES, FALLS UPON A COFFIN LID, WHICH SNAPS UP SO POWERFULLY THAT —



TIM HOLT

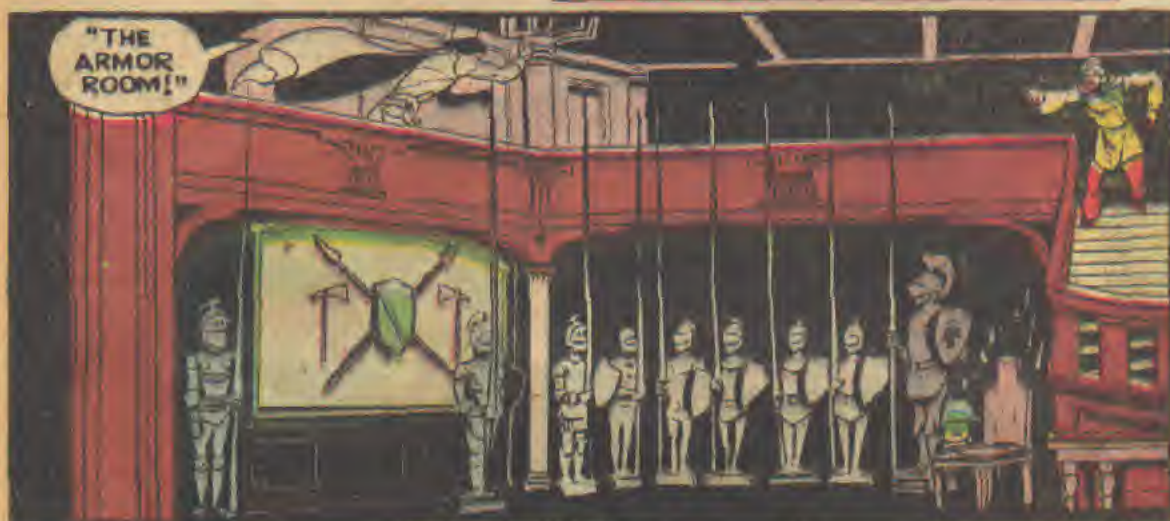


BUT WITH EVERY MUZZLE AIMED AT HIS HEART, THE GHOST RIDER NO SOONER ALIGHTS THAN HE INSTINCTIVELY DIES FOR COVER. —





NOT REALIZING THAT THE GHOST RIDER ESCAPED
SIMPLY BY SWIFT ROPE-CLIMBING, GABBINO IS NOW
SURE THAT HE HAS TO DO WITH A REAL SPIRIT —



BUT, QUICK AS A FLASH,
EVEN AS THE BALCONY
BEGINS TO SINK UNDER
HIM, THE GHOST RIDER
SPRINGS FOR ONE OF THE
PROJECTING LANCES AND
RIDES EASILY DOWN!





TIM HOLT

WHEN FIRE SWEEPS THE MAIN STREET IN BULLET—WHEN PRETTY ACTRESSES FACE DEATH BY HOT LEAD, AND HARDENED KILLERS MOCK THE LAW—THEN REDMAGIC STAGES HIS OWN PERFORMANCE TO HUNT DOWN THE DESPERADOES AND KILLERS WHO ACT SO VICIOUSLY IN—

"TERROR'S THEATRE"



OLD MOSSYHORN IS THE LEAD STEER ON TIM HOLT'S T-BAR-H RANCH. HE IS LORD OF THE RANGE AND PROUD OF HIS TITLE.

AND WHEN THE GOLD AND BLACK STAGE FROM CACTUS VALLEY SWINGS ALONG A WORN TRAIL OVER THE T-BAR-H GRAZELAND OLD MOSSYHORN BRUPTS WITH FURY...



CHITOI! OLD MOSSYHORN CAN'T CATCH THAT STAGE!

HQ! I AM FOR MAKING SURE, TIM!





JUST AS TOMBSTONE HAS ITS BIRD-GE OPERA HOUSE AND SAN ANTONIO ITS VAUDEVILLE VARIETY HOUSE AND TURNER HALL, SO BULLET HAS ITS OWN THEATRE — THE MUSICAL — BUILT BY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM TOWNEPEOPLE AND RANCHERS...

ONE MAN DID NOT SHARE THE TOWN'S SATISFACTION OVER ITS NEW THEATRE — ACES MOONEY, OWNER OF THE SALOON, THE CRYSTAL PALACE...



TIM HOLT



THAT NIGHT EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD FOR MILES AROUND RODE INTO BULLET FOR THE THEATRE OPENING...



THE PERFORMANCE IS WILDLY CHEERED.



NO ONE NOTICES THAT HERE AND THERE HARD-FACED MEN HAVE TAKEN THEIR POSITIONS, AND THAT SOME OF THEM ARE DRINKING HEAVILY AT THE BAR AT THE REAR OF THE THEATRE...





TIM HOLT



MOMENTS LATER, THE CRIMSON-CLAD FORM OF REDMASK HURTLES INTO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE...



TIM HOLT

THE DRY WOOD CATCHES FIRE EASILY. FLAMES LEAP SKYWARD, CAUSING THE NIGHT TO GLOW REDLY...

ACES WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BUSINESS NOW!

BY MORNING HE'LL HAVE THE ONLY SALOON IN TOWN! HAW! HAW!



HEY - LOOK!



WITH THE LEAD STEER OF THE T-BARN AT THE HEAD OF HIS HERD, REDMAEN STAMPEDES HIS CATTLE FROM THE SHIPPING PENS AND THROUGH BULLETT'S MAIN STREET...



AAAGGHH! YIII!!



YOU RATS CAME OUT OF SOME UNDERGROUND HIDING PLACE FOR THIS NIGHT'S WORK - AND I AIM TO FIND IT!



HAHA - THEY'RE ALL RACING INTO ACE MOONEY'S CRYSTAL PALACE! MAYBE I'M PLAYING IN GOOD LUCK FOR A CHANGE!

CRYSTAL PALACE

MINUTES LATER IN THE ALLEY BEHIND THE BURNING MUSICAL...



CHITO - GET OUT AND ROUND UP THE STEERS YOU'LL FIND ALL OVER TOWN! I'M GOING OVER TO THE CRYSTAL PALACE TO CLEAN OUT A RAT'S NEST!

TIM HOLT

AN EXPERTLY THROWN LARIAT LOOPS OVER A CHIMNEY OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE, AND SECONDS LATER REDMASK MOVES UP THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING...



AFTER AN EXHAUSTIVE SEARCH OF THE SEEMINGLY EMPTY SALOON, REDMASK PAUSES BEFORE A SECTION OF THE WALL...



MOMENTS LATER...



LIGHTNING-LIKE GUNHANDS DROP AND LIFT —



